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MAGHREB

Unity Movement

The meeting in mid-February between Moroccan King Hassan and Algerian President Bendjedid began a movement in North Africa toward greater Maghreb cooperation. Bendjedid, who has been the primary initiator of the unity effort, is apparently committed to the premise that regional stability will serve Algeria's--and its neighbors--long-term economic interests and is the best insurance against superpower intervention in the area. The cooperation scheme is also intended to curtail Libyan trouble-making and provide a more positive environment for negotiating a political settlement of the Western Sahara dispute, which is the most divisive issue in inter-Maghreb relations.

-- A Tunisian-Algerian summit in March improved cooperation and settled a long-standing border dispute. Algiers sees better relations as a block to Libya's meddling in Tunisian affairs.

-- Qadhafi's failure to gain the chairmanship of the OAU and the uncertainties resulting from his involvement in Chad have induced him to cooperate in the unity effort. In recent months Libyan relations with all three neighbors have markedly improved; moreover, he has publicly declared an end to Libyan military and political support of Polisario guerrillas.

-- Maghreb leaders hope that better relations with Libya will reduce Qadhafi's threat to them. Consequently, they have been unwilling to take a strong stand against Libya's troublemaking in Chad. The durability of this quid pro quo is highly questionable, however, given the fundamental incompatibilities between Qadhafi and particularly Moroccan and Tunisian leaders.

Western Sahara

Despite a more regular dialogue between Morocco and Algeria over the Saharan dispute, a settlement in the near term seems unlikely. Although acquisition of the Sahara remains a popular cause among Moroccans, the seemingly "unwinnable" war could eventually cause domestic trouble for the King.

-- There is growing uneasiness in Morocco regarding the impact of the war on the economy. Rabat's serious financial difficulties, caused in part by the war, may increase discontent with the regime as the impact of austerity measures are realized.

-- While Algeria, the Polisario Front's chief supporter, is

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more amenable to a political settlement, it still insists on direct Moroccan-Polisario negotiations. King Hassan refuses to give the guerrillas this kind of recognition and has generally been unwilling to take any substantial risks in the OAU-sponsored negotiations. Informal talks between Algiers and Rabat seem to be temporarily stalemated.

-- Renewed Polisario military activity in recent months is likely to continue as the Front attempts to force Morocco into direct negotiations.

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Background Paper--Libyan Activities in Africa

Current Libyan activities in Africa have concentrated on two main targets: Chad and Sudan.

-- Since the Libyans sent regular military units into Chad last July, they have captured Faya Largeau and occupied the northern third of the country.

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In Sudan, Libya has provided weapons, financing, and training to several Sudanese dissident factions for years.

-- The Libyans actively recruit Sudanese dissidents, especially those from western Sudan who have historical and commercial links to Libya and have long felt neglected by Khartoum.

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Elsewhere in Africa, Qadhafi has provided aid to more radical regimes.

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-- Libya supplied oil at favorable terms and military aid to the Rawlings regime in Ghana. Libya has currently cut off oil supplies, however, following Ghana's refusal to sign a defense pact or allow Libya basing rights.

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Several sub-Saharan states are likely targets for future Libyan subversive efforts.

-- For years, Tripoli has tried to incite disadvantaged Tuareg nomads in northern Niger to rise against pro-Western President Kounche.

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-- The Libyan people's bureau in Togo has been paying Togolese students and workers to convert to Islam. Several Togolese students were sent to Tripoli in August to study destabilization techniques and Qadhafi's philosophy. In the past year, Togo has hosted a Libyan-financed Islamic conference, agreed to allow the Libyans and Saudis to build an Islamic cultural center, and sent an 85-man delegation to the Pan-African Youth Conference in Tripoli.

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Syria

Assad's grip on power in Syria remains firm and we believe he faces no significant domestic political constraints on his current foreign policy preoccupations.

- The watershed of opposition activity against the regime came in February 1982 when the military crushed a Muslim Brotherhood-led uprising in the provincial city of Hamah, killing several thousand inhabitants.
- Since that event, with the cost of opposition activity having been raised so high and with further round-ups of militant opposition leaders, the Syrian population has been forced into sullen acquiescence to Assad's rule.

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We cannot rule out the possibility of a coup or assassination attempt, but we have detected no signs of a significant challenge to the regime. [redacted]

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Syria has come back from defeat and isolation following the fighting in Lebanon in the summer of 1982 to play an increasingly prominent role in the Arab world.

- If Syria accepts the reported Saudi and Kuwaiti effort to mediate between Damascus and Baghdad and reopen the pipeline, Assad will emerge as a key player in the Gulf crisis as well.
- Such a move would hold major benefits for Damascus in that it probably would bring additional Saudi and Gulf aid, advance Assad's importance to Moscow, and further Assad's aspirations to Arab leadership. [redacted]

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In Lebanon, Assad appears willing to tolerate a prolonged de facto partition of the country. He almost certainly calculates that time is on his side and that Israeli will ultimately falter.

- In the meantime, Assad will continue to apply political and indirect military pressure to seek a government in Beirut that takes its foreign policy cues from Damascus and that is unwilling to reach an accommodation with Israel. [redacted]

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Syrian policy toward the PLO reflects a drive to assert total control over Palestinian activity in Lebanon and to maximize the pressure on Arafat to give in to the demands of the Fatah rebels linked to Damascus.

- Having cornered the Fatah loyalists in Tripoli, Assad now effectively imposes a veto on independent Palestinian activity in Lebanon and gains insurance that Arafat could not regain a major political role in the country. [redacted]

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Damascus almost certainly will keep the pressure on Arafat to ensure no further PLO flirtation with the peace process independent of Damascus.

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Lebanon

The national reconciliation talks are likely to evolve into a lengthy and difficult process. In addition to substantive questions, procedural and security issues will probably lead to disagreements that will threaten to derail the conference.

-- The members of the National Salvation Front, led by Druze leader Walid Junblatt, will press for the abrogation of the Lebanese/Israel withdrawal agreement and for significant reforms of the current confessional system.

-- The Gemayel government and Christian politicians will be prepared to offer only limited concessions to the Muslims and Druze. Christian extremists, led by Phalange Party head Pierre Gemayel and Lebanese Forces militia commanders, favor only cosmetic changes in the 1943 National Pact.

-- All sides will be tempted to resort to military and terrorist operations to intimidate their opponents and wrest concessions.

Shia leader Nabih Barri, whose Amal militia controls Beirut's southern suburbs, may hold the balance of power at the conference. Although he has allied himself with the National Salvation Front, he is not a member and did not participate in force in the recent fighting.

-- Barri and the Shias--who would suffer the most from the continued de facto partition of Lebanon--favor a central government that would increase Shia influence over government policies. They want, however, a diminution of Phalangist influence, particularly in the military and security services, and a major economic reconstruction program.

If the talks break down and factional fighting resumes, Barri will be under extreme pressure to commit his militia to the fighting. The Lebanese Army would be hard pressed to fight effectively on two fronts.

-- If the talks drag on and there is no major escalation in the fighting, the Gemayel government could, at best, retain control over the greater Beirut area.

-- The Druze would control their semi-autonomous area, while Syria and Israel would continue to occupy the north, east and south.

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-- This de facto partition would meet many of the essential interests of most internal and external actors in Lebanon.

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Israel and Africa

Restoration of diplomatic relations with Sub-Saharan African nations is a key Israeli foreign policy goal. Israel believes expanded ties with African nations will lessen its diplomatic isolation, expand existing commercial relations and undercut Arab influence.

- Tel Aviv has recently succeeded in restoring relations with Zaire and Liberia (it already has relations with South Africa, Malawi, Lesotho and Swaziland) and has continuing contact with Ivory Coast, Central African Republic, Kenya and Guinea.

Israeli success in getting Zaire and Liberia to re-open ties stems largely from concern in these countries over Libyan expansionism and frustration at Arab failures to follow through on aid promises. Israeli promises of military and economic aid have also played a role.

- Nonetheless, many other African countries are reluctant to restore ties with Tel Aviv because of Israel's close relations with South Africa and continuing concern over last year's invasion of Lebanon.
- Despite intense Israeli efforts, there appears to be little prospect of any other African country restoring relations with the Jewish state in the near term.

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